

# PEOPLE & THINGS

I WONDER how many of those who go to the Berlin Conference will see the film "Bis Fünf Nach Zwölf" ("Till Five Minutes Past Twelve"), of which Mr. Hamish Hamilton has just given me a first-hand account. During a recent visit to Hamburg in search of new German books Mr. Hamilton dropped in to see this authentic survey of the Nazi régime, mostly constructed from newsreels, which was then showing to packed houses in eight cinemas in the city.

Many scenes found in the Goebbels archives are shown for the first time—for example, Hitler's life at the Berghof at Berchtesgaden; these show Eva Braun clad in a bikini, whereas Hitler, romping with dogs and children, in the warmest weather, never removes a stud. This carefree existence, with Hitler lolling in low armchairs at meals and gaily waving aside State papers, is contrasted with the grim realities elsewhere. Thus Eva Braun, after some swallow-dives into the pool, is standing under a cascade as if taking a shower; when the scene changes to a hand turning on the gas in an extermination chamber. Similarly, when Goering pleads not guilty at Nuremberg the scene changes to concentration camps.

The cumulative effect is a tremendous indictment of the Nazis. The German audience received it in frozen silence, punctuated by occasional laughter at the tirades of Goebbels.

I wonder when British audiences are to be allowed to see it.

## A Good European

CHESTER WILMOT, the military correspondent of "The Observer," was one of that brilliant band of Australian newspapermen (among them Alan Moorehead and the late William Munday) whose war-reports aroused admiration throughout the world. The brooding, fatherly, bull-necked figure of Wilmot won the affection of his colleagues in the field by the unselfish passion for the truth which caused him, for example, to motor fifteen miles through the depth of a German winter to verify a fact for a fellow journalist.

In later years Wilmot, the reporter gave place to Wilmot the historian, and I fancy that, if the history of his own thoughts ever came to be written, the account would be like that of Henry James's "The Ambassadors"—with the disagreeable realities of international relations substituted for the pleasures of aesthetic adventure; for Wilmot was a man who came to Europe as a stranger, fell in love with it, and gave his great energies entirely to its service.

## Highbrows at Sea

IN the mammoth ballroom not a hundred yards from Hyde Park the scene last Thursday evening suggested nothing so much as the first-class lounge of an ocean liner on its first night out of harbour. As the distinguished actress gave a humorous recitation, and the distinguished tenor a selection of favourite ballads, only the steadiness of the floor reminded the enormous audience that it lay at anchor in Park Lane.

The ship's complement would admittedly have been very oddly composed: for the fifteen hundred guests were celebrating the twenty-fifth birthday of "The Listener," and they included

By ATTICUS

nearly everybody of consequence in the literary and journalistic world of London.

## Prestidigitator

THERE was one visitor from abroad who might well have contributed to the cabaret: for Mr. Edmund Wilson, America's foremost literary critic, is, in his moments of leisure, an accomplished conjurer. It is no secret that Mr. Wilson has not always



Douglas Glare

Edmund Wilson

been the warmest of Anglophiles; but I was delighted to find that on this visit he has mellowed to the point of becoming a fervent admirer of the work and personality of that most English of writers, Mr. John Betjeman.

Mr. Wilson's own admirers, who rank his "To the Finland Station" with Sainte-Beuve's "Port-Royal," will be glad to know that he is working on an extensive survey of the literary history of the American Civil War.

## Airborne Sculptor

FORMERLY it was the foreign correspondent the top business executive and the professional adventurer who excited our envy with their unlimited opportunities for travel. Today the great painter or the sculptor in his applauded prime seem to us equally privileged as they fly non-stop from Venice to Venezuela, or make the round trip to Tokyo for a lecture-date.

Mr. Henry Moore, for instance, has just returned from Mexico and Brazil, where his sculptures won the first prize at the international exhibition in São Paulo. Himself a monument of sturdy good sense, Mr. Moore remains as unaffected by his own successes as by the more sensational aspects of life in these countries.

When he told me, however, of the experiences enjoyed by Brazil's leading young architects—millionaires before they are forty, their every fancy indulged by doting clients, their leisure devoted to motor-racing and the collection of Cézannes—I could not help contrasting the lot of their English contemporaries, who have almost to cringe to their local authorities for the right to buy a pair of dividers.

## Ancient Mexico

IN Mexico Mr. Moore was amazed as all travellers are, by the profusion of pre-Columbian remains.

There, too, the artist is a favoured being, and the great muralist Diego Rivera has a collection of more than thirty thousand specimens of archaic art.

Through his generosity, and that of other Mexican colleagues, Mr. Moore was able to bring home a small but choice collection of Mexican archaic sculpture; and I shall be curious to see how Mr. Moore's own work is affected by the daily contemplation of these potent little objects.

## What, No Matisse?

THAT exclamation was prompted by the Tate's announcement of its recent purchase of a painting and a piece of sculpture, both dated 1932, by Picasso; but I understand that in fact an early Matisse is one of the gaps that its trustees would dearly like to fill if they could. The announcement and the Tate's controversial sale of a picture from the Courtauld collection give a particular topicality to the appearance of Mr. Douglas Cooper's catalogue of the Samuel Courtauld collection.

The word "catalogue" has a dusty, mathematical ring, which is belied in this case by a book (published by the University of London) that is almost as sumptuous as the pictures it describes. The budding collector can draw inspiration not only from Courtauld himself, but from the other champions of Impressionism whom Mr. Cooper praises.

Mr. Hill, for instance, the Brighton tailor, was buying Degas nearly fifty years before the National Gallery got round to him and the venerated figure of Sir William Burrell, the Glasgow connoisseur, today, at the age of ninety-two, can look back over sixty years of buying at the bottom of the market.

## Rousseau on Records?

THOSE who have heard "Le Coq d'Or" at Covent Garden will agree with my colleague Ernest Newman that Igor Markevitch the conductor "handled the lovely score as if he loved it."

When I called on the still-young Mr. Markevitch in the cavernous villa which he has taken off the Fulham Road, I found that his affection extends not only to Rimsky-Korsakov's glittering score but to the whole of English life. He envelopes London in a glow of admiration that even harks backwards to our choice of diversions in war-time. "Those air raids!" he said to me. "How I wish I had watched the women of great family reading Homer in the Underground!"

It is good news that he is to make many records here; as his interests extend not only to the farthest crevices of the international repertory, but to the compositions of such great Europeans as Nietzsche and Rousseau who are not usually regarded as composers at all. I see no reason why the recordings should not be prolonged indefinitely.

## Comparative Criticism

I WAS amused to note that the weekly magazine which is serialising Dr. Arthur Bryant's new "History of England" has declared the book to be "as great in its way, as 'The Cruel Sea'."

This seems to me to break new ground in the fields of comparative criticism. Is the "Decline and Fall," for instance, as "great in its way" as "Quo Vadis"? O would Gibbon's admirers be flying too high in proffering such an estimate?